(b) and (c) Does not arise. However, Government of India is implementing a FAO sponsored project namely, "Apple Production improvement Project" at a total cost of US$ 3,60,000 in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal since March, 2003. Under this project assistance has been provided to Government of Himachal Pradesh to strengthen and develop the capabilities of the Government to improve apple productivity and nursery sector, through selected technologies, expert advice, training and planting material. Under the project three potential districts of Himachal Pradesh for apple production namely Shimla, Kullu and Chamba are covered.

Approving Price Support Scheme of Kerala

1810. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal seeking price support scheme for cash crops from Kerala Government is pending for sanction;

(b) if so, the decision, if any, arrived at on the same and if so, the details thereof, and if not the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government of Kerala has sought the intervention of Government to include the perennial crops under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme and if so, whether Government have taken any decision in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) No proposal for Government of Kerala seeking Price Support Scheme for cash crops is pending. On the request of State/UT Government, the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture is implementing Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for procurement of agricultural and horticultural commodities generally perishable in nature and not covered under Price Support Scheme. During 2005-06 on the request of Government of Kerala, the Ministry of Agriculture implemented MIS for procurement of 5050 MT Black pepper at the Market Intervention Price of Rs. 7000/- per qtl. from 15.2.2005 to 15.4.2005.

(c) The State Government of Kerala has requested for coverage of perennial/horticultural crops like coconut, arecanut, cashewnut, cardamom, tea, coffee etc. under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS). A Joint Group constituted by the Government to study the improvement

required in the existing Crop Insurance Scheme has given a number of suggestions including coverage of perennial/horticultural crops under a separate scheme. The report of this Group is under consideration of the Government.

Awareness about MSP

1811. SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that 81 percent farmers do not know about the minimum support price;

(b) whether it is a fact that a good percentage of farmers are not aware of how to sell their produce under MSP; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government to create awareness among farmers in this respect?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) According to Situation Assessment Survey of Farmers carried out by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in its 59th Round (January-December, 2003), 71 per cent of farmers did not know or understand the concept of Minimum Support Price. Among the farmers surveyed, 10 per cent understood what Minimum Support Price meant but not of the procurement agency. Remaining 19 per cent not only understood the idea of Minimum Support Price but also knew the agency (if not its name, its location) to which they would sell their crop if its market price fell below the Minimum Support Price.

(c) To create awareness among farmers support is provided to the States in strengthening extension programmes through a number of schemes. The various schemes include: support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms, Mass Media Support to Agriculture, Kisan Call Centres and Establishment of Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Centres by Agriculture Graduates. Under the Central Sector Scheme on Mass Media Support to Agriculture Extension, agriculture related information and knowledge to the farming community is provided through 172 Narrow Casting Centres, 18 Regional Centres, 1 National Doordarshan Kendra and through 96 FM radio stations. Information on Minimum Support Prices of various commodities is being disseminated through these programmes to the farmers since September 2005 onwards.